

# SPEEDI-BEET FOR FOALS



By Carl Bonner, KZN Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet agent

I first heard of SPEEDI-BEET at a Jayne Hunt (equine podiatrist from the UK) course in November 2007. She said that too many horses, especially foals, have unhealthy hooves and joints because they don't get the right nutrition. And then she had me looking at my kikuyu pastures with a different eye...knee deep green grass...BUT not so good for a balanced diet since kikuyu lacks calcium and phosphorus, green grass is high in sugars, and so are most concentrates. Speedi Beet is a slow release, sustainable energy carbohydrate flake that addressed the imbalances of my horses' diets and saved me money on my feed bill too! (SPEEDI-BEET kick starts your horse's digestive system and allows him to utilize the nutrients in his concentrates and grazing more effectively).

Over the past 18 months of selling SPEEDI-BEET, I have found that many breeders are hesitant to "overfeed" their foals with concentrates as they are worried about contracted tendons, and so often battle with the feeding regime of their foals. Having successfully come through 2 foals seasons now, feeding my foals a 2/3 Speedi Beet, 1/3 Spurwing Foal Start mix, I have seen the difference in my foals. The International Friesian judges who travel the world registering and judging foals this year were highly impressed with the overall condition of my foals and the quality of their legs, joints and hooves, and my farriers are astounded at the health of their hooves every time they see them.

Dr Tom Shurlock, nutritionist for British Horse Feeds, writes the following:

Specialist diets for foals tend to be more nutrient dense - this is due to lower relative intake. Although intake is assumed to be 2-2.5% of body weight, it is actually a factor of metabolic body weight, and this is a power function. So a young horse needs to eat more, but may be restricted physically.

In Foals there will be greater needs for protein, lysine and threonine - although not overly high. Supplementing forage with feed at a level of 12-14% protein, with forage being 1/3rd intake - rising to 1/2 for yearlings and on up to adult proportions. Vegetable sources tend to be low in lysine, with the lowest proportion (as % of Crude Protein) found in cereals such as oats. One of the highest proportions of lysine:protein is sugar beet, followed by soya. If the route of not feeding a compounded feed (which would have added amino acids, probably) is followed Speedi-Beet would likely supply sufficient lysine. The same is true for threonine.

Minerals. Grass generally has sufficient minerals and trace elements to sustain growth in the foal, with the possible exception of selenium. Obviously these levels vary both within and between varieties, as well as season, soil type etc. Foals raised on a predominantly fibre diet will require higher levels of calcium, phosphorus and magnesium, especially foals living on kikuyu pastures.

Therefore feeding Speedi-Beet will give adequate minerals, and the Ca will offset the low levels of cereals, if fed. Foals have a slightly higher requirement for calcium and phosphorus in the feed. Bone growth will stimulate intake, and the higher pro rata feed intake in foals will generally compensate. An approximate ratio of Ca:P::2:1 is recommended for foals, but this will depend on source. Speedi-Beet's ration is slightly higher and compensates for the lack of Ca in our pastures.

Finally data has shown that foals weaned onto a fat/fibre diet - compared to a starch/sugar diet - are calmer, more inquisitive and less likely to move away from novel objects and people. I would say that the best compromise would be to feed a forage/Speedi-Beet mix with a bit of hard feed to supplement minerals amino acids etc.

Fibre Beet is a new addition to the range of British Horse Feeds' products and has micronized Lucerne, Oat fibre and Speedi-Beet, and for broodmares and horses from 3 yrs and older, it is a great conditioning feed particularly during winter months when the grazing has insufficient nutrients.

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